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SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY GROWS IN JUBA

11. SUMMARY: As one indication of the growing strength of civil society in Southern Sudan, the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba with the support of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the Life and Peace Institute Horn of Africa, organized a workshop for the "Voice of Women for Peace and Faith Civil Group Society (VWPFCGS)" in Juba from May 8-12. The topics discussed at this peace rally were peace building, leadership and teamwork, democracy, the comprehensive peace agreement and human rights, and the constitution. The workshop was concluded by a peace rally held at Dr. Garang memorial in Juba on May 13. End Summary.

Background

12. The Voice of Women for Peace and Faith (VWPF) is a civil society organization dedicated to peace and gender equality. It was formed in October, 2005 following a workshop organized by the Sudan Aid Women's Desk Office under the auspices of the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba. VWPF membership includes representatives from the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church of Sudan, the Africa Inland Church, the Presbyterian Church, and Muslim women.

Peace Rally

13. The peace rally following the workshop was the first of its kind in Juba since the formation of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) in October 2005. James Wani Igga, Speaker of Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA), Henry Danga, Deputy Governor of Bahr Al Jebel State (BJS), and Archbishop Paulino Lokudu Loro of Juba spoke at the rally, which was attended by dignitaries, officials from the GoSS and BJS, and an audience of about 200, mostly women. Scattered in the crowd were banners which read "women's call for realization of the 25% of government position" (Note: this refers to the CPA provision giving 25 percent of government positions to qualified women. End Note.), "halt violence against women" and "give women a chance," among others.

Speeches

14. During the speeches, the Deputy Governor of BJS, Henry Danga, affirmed his government's commitment to the 25 percent and said that there are 15 women who would soon graduate from their training and begin work as BJS officials. He promised to raise women's participation in the state government to 50 percent.

Comment

17. Civil society groups are becoming more active, and getting more firmly established in the nascent southern societal structures. There will most likely be more civil society celebrations and gatherings within the coming months. While still celebratory, these demonstrations may become more contentious if the people's expectations for development are not met. End Comment.

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